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5 September 1979

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MEMORANDUM FOR: [redacted]
Director, Center for the Study
of Intelligence, Office of Training

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

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SUBJECT: CONTRA

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STAT 1. I enjoyed your second issue of CONTRA. I thought [redacted] article was right on the mark of bringing out a distinctly contrary view. STAT I thought [redacted] piece was very stimulating and I've taken follow-
STAT up action with respect to it. [redacted] article and [redacted] pieces were stimulating also. [redacted]

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2. In line with my discussion with you on trying to get directly opposing views expressed on the same topic, I commend your attention to a recent article in The New York Times by Harrison Salisbury (copy attached). He cited half a dozen assumptions of our modern political environment which might prove invalid in the future, e.g., a continuation of the Sino-Soviet rivalry. He pointed out that over history it's often been the failure to recognize that some such assumptions were not going to last forever. That has led to serious errors. You might look at whether it would be possible to find pairs of people who would be willing to write on the two sides of the issues that Salisbury raises, i.e., that the Sino-Soviet rivalry is bound to continue or that there is a good probability that they will patch it up at least on the surface. [redacted] STAT

3. The other assumptions Salisbury mentioned are that India and Japan will not develop nuclear weapons, that a Sino-Japanese alliance will not develop, that a Soviet-Indian alliance will not develop, that an Iranian-Iraqi alliance will not develop, that there will not be an Israeli nuclear attack on the Arabs, that the Egyptians and Soviets will remain estranged, STAT and that there will not be a resurgence of German militarism. [redacted]

[redacted]
STANSFIELD TURNER

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Attachment a/s

Per ES, copies furnished:
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The Hitler-Stalin Pact

By Harrison E. Salisbury

On Aug. 23, 1939, the German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop secretly arrived in Moscow; on Aug. 24, he and Stalin signed the Soviet-Nazi pact, and seven days later World War II began with the Wehrmacht invasion of Poland.

The Soviet-Nazi pact struck the uneasy post-Munich world like a bolt of lightning from a clear summer sky. I was vacationing on the hot, desolate beach of Nags Head, N.C., and I was incredulous as I heard the news crackling out from a portable radio. No one believed it. War, yes. We had lived on its brink for months. But a deal between those deadly enemies, Hitler and Stalin? Inconceivable!

It is that inconceivability that is worth pondering today.

It is the "inconceivable" that again and again puts the world into peril. The imaginative capability of diplomats is traditionally limited. Generals always prepare to fight the last war again, and statesmen occupy themselves repeating Versailles or Vienna or Potsdam.

But it is the inconceivable that happens.

Against the judgment of every expert, Hitler and Stalin *did* get together and the pact of Aug. 24, 1939 triggered World War II. What lesson did the diplomats learn from that? A simple one. They now believed (Stalin among them) that the pact would endure far into the future, that Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia would stay in partnership and divide the world.

After 40 years, the non-lessons of the 'inconceivable'

Again, they were wrong. To many, the Nazi attack on Russia on June 22, 1941, was as big a surprise as the August 1939 agreement.

What World War II proved was that not one piece of conventional wisdom was viable.

What were the clichés of 1939?

That France possessed "the best land army in Europe."

That the Maginot Line was "impregnable."

That the Royal Air Force hadn't a chance to beat off Herman Göring's Luftwaffe.

That Germany would never fight a two-front war.

That the Red Army would not last a month against Nazi blitzkrieg.

That once was enough — the United States had entered World War I and would never participate in World War II.

That Japan would never attack the United States.

That Pearl Harbor was invulnerable.

Every basic presumption of the diplomats and the generals proved wrong.

What have we learned in the 40 years since Aug. 24, 1939? Not much. We went into the cold war convinced that Communism was indivisible, that Marxism was a Gibraltar with its headquarters in the Kremlin. Stalin ran it all.

When Marshal Tito first broke with Stalin, most diplomats and many Americans called it a Communist trick. How could there be divisions within the Marxist monolith? When the Soviet Union and Communist China parted ways in the late 1950's, John Foster Dulles refused to believe it. When I reported on Soviet-Chinese conflict in Outer Mongolia in 1959, this evidence of a basic split between the Communist giants was pooh-poohed; it continued to be until the Nixon-Kissinger "opening" to China in 1971-72. Today, conflict and war in the "indivisible" Communist world is common.

The canny statesman today would look around the world for the "inconceivables": *rapprochement* between Moscow and Peking; military and nuclear armament of India and Japan; a Sino-Japanese alliance; a Soviet-Indian alliance; an Iranian-Iraqi alliance; an Israeli nuclear attack on the Arabs; a new Egyptian-Soviet deal; a resurgence of German militarism.

All of these developments lie in that vast imaginative region that Herman Kahn calls "thinking the unthinkable." Each is unthinkable. Probably none will happen. But a prudent statesman, a man who understands the lessons of Aug. 24, 1939, will not write them all off.

Foreign policy, the balance of world powers, the interrelationship of states is not something set in concrete. It is in constant motion like the tides of a turbulent sea.

Forty years after the most devastating international event of the century, there is no evidence that its lessons have been absorbed, analyzed or, indeed, even remembered by the men who make American policy or those upon whom that policy rests for its support, the American people.

Harrison E. Salisbury, retired Associate Editor of The New York Times, was The Times's correspondent in Moscow for many years. He is author of "Black Night, White Snow," a revisionist examination of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1917.